

How Medicine Take-Back Works

Medicine take-back programs are the secure and environmentally sound way to dispose of leftover and expired medicines.

- Ongoing drop-off programs are usually at a pharmacy or a law enforcement office.
- Take-back programs use secure equipment and procedures to prevent theft or diversion.
- Collected medicines are destroyed in a way that protects our environment.

Take-back programs can be

- Ongoing drop-off programs.
- One-day collection events.
- Mail-back programs.
- Combinations of these approaches.

Pharmacy programs: These programs can accept all over-the-counter medicines and prescription medicines, except those that are controlled substances.

Law enforcement programs: Most law enforcement programs accept all medicines, including controlled substances; some only accept prescription medicines.

Current federal regulations allow only law enforcement to collect controlled substances. The DEA is writing new regulations to allow additional collection options.

Secure drop boxes, tracking and storage

Unwanted medicines are deposited in metal collection bins that have been specially designed to prevent theft. Medicines deposited into the bin drop into a plastic bucket or cardboard box. When that inner container is full, trained staff follow strict procedures to seal the box, assign a tracking number, and send it to a secure storage facility.

Secure and proper disposal

Once a shipment of boxes has accumulated in a secure storage area, the waste medicines are sent to a disposal facility, where they are destroyed by high temperature incineration.

Demand is high

The demand for medicine take-back is high. Washington residents are using voluntary take-back programs because they are convenient, secure and don't pollute the environment. Unfortunately, these programs are funded with shrinking local government and law enforcement budgets, pharmacy funds, or grants – sources of funding that are not guaranteed. Due to a lack of funds, large areas of our state have no ongoing take-back locations.



Since the first program started in Washington in 2003, no theft or diversion of any returned medicines has occurred in any authorized medicine take-back program.

Learn more about how medicine take-back programs work at:
<http://www.takebackyourmeds.org/why/how-medicine-take-back-works>

